

Blended Learning in the New Normal: EFL Student and Teacher Perceptions and Reactions

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Abstract

To reopen educational institutions and return to the classroom, we all need to modify how we act to successfully face the challenges of the new normal resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and entailing our insights into and the after-effects of the pandemic. More specifically, the new normal might encompass online education we are getting used to during the pandemic and the age-old onsite education as well. Thoughtfully integrated, online and onsite learning combine to create blended learning. However, the pertinent literature reveals that English as a foreign language (EFL) students and teachers differently perceive and react to blended learning in diverse contexts. This study was designed to explore student and teacher perceptions of and reactions to blended learning in the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University in the new normal. Fifty undergraduates of EFL and eight teachers of the department participated in the study. To collect data from them, the Student Questionnaire and the Teacher Questionnaire were used. And the data were processed by applying the SPSS programme module. The findings revealed that the majority of the students and the teachers had mostly positive perceptions of blended learning, although the former did not have sufficient exposure to online learning and the latter lacked adequate insights into online teaching. Further, both the students and the teachers expressed mostly positive reactions to blended learning in the new normal, though the former deemed online examinations inadequately smooth and reliable, and the latter had insufficient experience of online instruction and assessment. The study categorically recommends reforming the curriculum, adopting relevant instructional strategies, developing suitable materials, customizing the assessment, integrating and installing technology, training the teachers, upskilling the students for blended learning, improving the infrastructure, and adjusting the management.

Keywords: new normal, blended learning, undergraduates of EFL and teachers, perceptions, reactions

Introduction

We all have been moved, affected, shut down and altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Just opening the doors is not sufficient to get back to the classroom. Besides, we all have

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individually changed, and our practices, priorities, needs, interests, and expectations have dramatically shifted. The things that were significant two years ago can appear quite different to what we consider important now. Since we have begun to reopen educational institutions and re-enter the classroom, we all have to adapt the way we work to fulfil the requirements of the new normal with a conspicuous vision of what the future might be like. This is a mode which commences with clarifying and understanding the exact appearance of the new normal. And the new normal will, most probably, accommodate what we are getting used to during the COVID-19 pandemic, that is, emergency remote teaching and online learning plus the age-old in-person learning of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Instruction designed, developed and delivered technologically can meet learner needs and be tailored to the factors individual learners have. Thoughtful planning and development principles and parameters are possibly clear to fully capable students and, meanwhile, allow them with disabilities to have the same educational knowledge and skill (Abernathy, 2001). Alessi and Trollip (1991) identify specific instances in which computer-based teaching proves effective. While some desire some educational experience to be fulfilling to learners, some others also desire to exploit technology maximally to provide for a better learning experience (Dobbs, 2000; Dooling, 2000). As a result, EFL students and teachers might have diverse perceptions of and reactions to blending together online and onsite learning resulting in blended learning.

The worldwide shutdowns of educational institutions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have substituted in-person education with online teaching and learning traditionally accepted as less demanding, less motivational, less valid, less reliable and less prestigious. The transition to online teaching and learning at lightning speed might have negatively impacted upon student and teacher attitude, motivation, preparedness, practice, and performance, especially in the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University. Consequently, EFL student and teacher perceptions of and reactions to online teaching and learning might have a bearing on instruction, assessment, and learning outcomes. Moreover, the new normal anticipated as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic might demand new plans and policies to implement EFL programmes. Amalgamated, online and onsite learning constitute blended learning. In other words, blended learning incorporates the thoughtful integration of in-person face-to-face learning with online learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). This mode of learning requiring an intentional and integrated approach (Zenger & Uehlein, 2001) encompasses the best practices of online learning and onsite instruction with a view to facilitating learning and should mainly depend upon the needs and interests of students and teachers.

As is observed in the Western World and North America in particular, an English language programme might be a combination of onsite and online education generally termed 'blended or hybrid learning' (Zenger & Uehlein, 2001) in the new normal in many institutions including ours. However, a literature review reveals diverse perceptions and reactions of EFL students and teachers to blended learning in varied settings (e.g., Wiffin, 2002, Wingard, 2004, Neumeier, 2005, Grgurovic, 2011, @DreamBox_Learn, 2013, O'Connell, 2016, The County Schools, 2021). Moreover, the present researcher was not aware of any such investigations already carried out in Bangladesh, especially in the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University. As the issue remained under-researched, particularly in the

Department of English, Jahangirnagar University, investigations into it were obviously warranted. Hence, the aim of the current study was to examine EFL student and teacher perceptions of and reactions to blended learning in the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University in the new normal.

Literature review

Blended learning has been the focus of many investigations that examined its use and effectiveness in the second/foreign language context. A study conducted by Sharma and Barrett (2007) revealed a number of factors affecting the uptake of blended learning. The factors included positive or negative attitudes of teachers to using technology, learner proficiency, teacher training, and teacher and student accessibility to technology. The factors played an important role in decisions as to carrying out a blended learning approach in English language learning and teaching. Further, Shih (2010) conducted a study with 40 English as a second language learners and unfolded blended learning could be employed productively to enhance learners' language skills. Specifically, the findings showed that the use of the blended learning along with video-based blogs is of benefit including developing the students' speaking skills, improving a sense of independence and collaboration, and promoting learning.

Grgurovic (2011) examined the use of blended learning in an English as a second language setting. The study was planned to ascertain how blended learning was exploited in classes as well as how face-to-face and distance learning were combined. The investigation was carried out in a class offering instruction in speaking and listening in a programme in the USA. The samples were 19 English as a second language students and one English language instructor. The findings showed that blended learning could be productively employed to teach all the language skills. The teachers as well as the students had positive perceptions of and attitudes to incorporating blended learning into teaching English language. The subjects believed that online teaching assisted the traditional ways and hence accelerated the students' language learning. In addition, based on the findings of the study, Marsh (2012) claimed blended learning more effective than traditional teaching in several respects, such as fostering language learners' autonomy, supplying more individualized language support, enhancing collaborative learning, promoting student interaction and participation, facilitating practice of the language skills beyond the classroom, and improving the learners' language skills. Therefore, the purpose of using a blended learning approach can be to find a consistent balance between online access to information and knowledge and onsite activities and interaction.

Manan et al. (2012) investigated the usefulness of teaching in blended learning by using Facebook groups together with face-to-face instruction in an English as a second language context. The study included 30 undergraduate English as a second language learners at a public Malaysian university. The students received instruction through the conventional classroom teaching and Facebook groups as well. It was disclosed that the majority of subjects indicated positive perceptions of the learning strategy. Similarly, Liu (2013) explored the usefulness of blended learning in an English writing course at a university in Beijing.

The investigation evaluated several facets of blended learning including course design, material presentation, student involvement, and classroom assessment. It offered many advantages covering encouraging autonomous learning, promoting classroom interactions, reducing communication anxiety, and developing learners' writing competencies. It was concluded that the use of blended learning was more motivating and inspiring than only onsite learning.

Ja'ashan (2015) examined student perceptions of and attitudes to blended learning in an English course at Bisha University, Saudi Arabia. A population of 130 undergraduate English learners was surveyed to assess their perceptions and attitudes. The findings of the study showed that students had positive perceptions of blended learning. The subjects believed the blended learning approach could be used to promote their language skills, foster their learning autonomy, accelerate student-teacher interaction, promote the learning process, and help them have interesting learning experiences. Likewise, Banditvilai (2016) carried out a study to examine the use of blended learning to develop learners' English language skills and independence at an Asian university. The research conducted in an English for specific purpose class included 60 undergraduates majoring in English. The results disclosed that the an online approach consistent with classroom instruction improved the English language skills of the language learners. It was also found that blended learning could be used effectively to promote independent learning and learner motivation. The conclusion of the study includes "Blended learning is a valuable concept that can be used to more successfully achieve teaching goals." (p.227).

Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017) explored the impact of using blended learning on enhancing English language learners' reading skills. The subjects were randomly assigned to an experimental group receiving classroom instructions and blended learning, and a control group having a traditional approach to teaching English language. The groups were tested before as well as after the treatment to assess the learners' reading proficiency level. Then using a t-test, the researchers noticed the use of blended learning had a statistically significantly positive impact on the EFL learners' reading proficiency. The investigators also stated that blended learning facilitated the learning and could be productively adopted for teaching English reading. Similarly, a study carried out by Zhang and Zhu (2018) explored the usefulness of blended learning compared to the traditional ways exploited to teach English in China. A sample of 5376 students enrolled in English as a second language courses at a university in Beijing participated in the study. The findings disclosed that the students using a blended learning mode had better achievement in English as a second language courses when compared with other students taught using the traditional classroom methods. Another study conducted by Akbarov, et al. (2018) investigated 162 English language learners' attitudes to blended learning in an EFL context and also revealed the learners' positive perceptions and attitudes regarding blended learning. The findings indicated that the subjects believed that the use of blended learning helped develop their proficiency in English.

Rerung (2018) designed a study to determine 30 students' perceptions of the use of both online and onsite learning in the listening and speaking classroom. The findings of the study disclosed that the majority of the students considered online learning as an alternative tool to assist them in learning. Erickson (2019) carried out a study to examine blended learning

in Adult Basic Education ESL programmes because it develops as a new practice. Data were collected from 11 Adult Basic Education English teachers of the United States by using in-depth interviews. The study revealed that the ESL educational setting was unique in ways that influenced how blended learning should have been used.

To conclude, the study reviewed above uncovered that blended learning can be employed to promote the learning process and achieving learning outcomes. EFL learners usually have positive perceptions of and attitudes to blended learning as teaching mode. The positive perspectives are derived from several directions covering enhancing students' language skills in an interacting and engaging context, facilitating the learning, and creating opportunities to be autonomous learners.

Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the current study, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How do the EFL students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University perceive blended learning in the new normal?

RQ2: What are the reactions of the EFL students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to blended learning in the new normal?

RQ3: How do the EFL teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University view blended learning in the new normal?

RQ4: What are the reactions of the EFL teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to blended learning in the new normal?

Method

Respondents

Fifty undergraduates of EFL and eight teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University randomly selected responded to the respective questionnaires. Random samplings are usually strongly preferred since all populations possess the same possibility to be selected and can easily be calculated in an investigation. Hence, the present study exploited the simple random sampling while selecting the respondents because it was easy to apply, inexpensive and caused comparatively less trouble (Robert, 1997).

Instruments

To collect data from 50 undergraduates of EFL and eight teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University, the Student Questionnaire (Appendix-I) and the Teacher Questionnaire (Appendix-II) were used. The questionnaires were modelled on the scale and questionnaire developed by Albirini (2006), Al-Zaiydeen et al. (2010), the questionnaire and focus group discussions employed by Khan, et al., (2021), and semi-structured interviews designed by Agboola (2016). Both questionnaires were concerned with two major variables – student/teacher perceptions of and reactions to blended learning.

Student perceptions of blended learning related to the first research question “How do the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University perceive hybrid learning in the new normal?” entailed six items, Question No. 11 to 16, covering aware of best practices of onsite learning, aware of best practices of online learning, online delivery being more attractive and effective than onsite, onsite activities being more attractive and effective than online, teachers enjoying onsite plus online teaching more, and a thoughtful combination of online and onsite learning more.

Similarly, teacher perceptions of blended learning linked to the third research question “How do the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University view hybrid learning in the new normal?” included six items, Question No. 11 to 16, encompassing aware of best practices of onsite learning, aware of best practices of online learning, online delivery being more attractive and effective than onsite, onsite activities being more attractive and effective than online, students enjoying onsite plus online teaching more, and a thoughtful combination of online and onsite learning more.

Again, student reactions to blended learning concerned with the second research question “What are the reactions of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to hybrid learning in the new normal?” had 10 items, Question No. 1 to 10, including student readiness, student interest, student feeling of teacher motivation, and student capability.

Likewise, teacher reactions to blended learning connected with the fourth research question “What are the reactions of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to hybrid learning in the new normal?” entailed 10 items, Question No. 1 to 10, covering teacher readiness, teacher interest, teacher feeling of student motivation, and teacher expertise.

Thus, each of the questionnaires included 16 items designed as the 5-point scale (Likert, 1932), in which 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

Collection and Analysis of Data

The data for the current study were collected from two populations – one including 50 undergraduates of EFL and the other consisting eight teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University by using the Student Questionnaire and the Teacher Questionnaire respectively. Fifty undergraduates of EFL and eight teachers of the Department of

English, Jahangirnagar University responded to the respective questionnaires online. The usable response rate of the students was 83% and that of the teachers was 62%. The data collected from the students and the teachers were processed and analyzed by operating the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) programme module. More specifically, descriptive statistics were employed to sum up the data including frequency percentages, means and standard deviations.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of the analysis of the data collected from both student and teacher respondents have been presented below according to their responses to different variables constituting the research questions related to their perceptions of and reactions to blended learning during the new normal.

RQ1: How do the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University perceive blended learning in the new normal?

Student perceptions of blended learning in the new normal included six items, Item No. 11 to 16, awareness of best practices of onsite learning, awareness of best practices of online learning, online delivery being more attractive and effective than onsite, onsite activities being more attractive and effective than online, teachers enjoying onsite plus online teaching more, and a thoughtful combination of online and onsite learning being more effective than online or onsite learning alone.

The findings of descriptive analysis showed that 90% students (Strongly Agree 34% + Agree 56%) were aware of best practices of onsite learning, whereas 48% students (Strongly Agree 12% + Agree 36%) were aware of best practices of online learning and 34% did not have any opinion.

Further, 36% students (Strongly Agree 8% + Agree 28%) considered online content delivery more attractive and effective than onsite delivery, but 36% did not, whereas 28% expressed no views. On the other hand, 84% students were in favor of onsite activities being more attractive and effective than online activities.

Again, 68% students (Strongly Agree 22% + Agree 46%) felt their teachers were enjoying onsite plus online teaching more than only onsite or online teaching. And 80% students (Strongly Agree 48% + Agree 32%) supported a thoughtful combination of online and onsite teaching being more effective than online or onsite learning alone.

Thus, the majority of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University positively perceived hybrid learning in the new normal, although only 48% students were aware of best practices of online learning and only 36% students considered online content delivery more attractive and effective than onsite delivery. The findings were consistent with the Means 4.16, 3.32, 2.98, 4.24, 3.74 and 4.16 and Standard Deviations .842, 1.115, 1.134, .716, 1.065 and 1.017 respectively (Table 5.1.1.1).

	Aware of best practices of onsite learning	Aware of best practices of online learning	Online delivery more attractive and effective than onsite	Onsite activities more attractive and effective than online	Teachers enjoying onsite plus online teaching more	A thoughtful combination of online and onsite learning more
N	Valid 50	50	50	50	50	50
	Missing 0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.16	3.32	2.98	4.24	3.74	4.16
Median	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	4	4	3 ^a	4	4	5
Std. Deviation	.842	1.115	1.134	.716	1.065	1.017
Minimum	1	1	1	3	1	2
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5

Table 5.1.1.1: Student perceptions of hybrid learning

To discuss the findings presented above, it is conspicuous that the first research question “How do the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University perceive hybrid learning in the new normal?” received mixed responses from the students. First, 90% students were aware of best practices of onsite learning, but only 48% students were aware of best practices of online learning and 34% did not have any opinion. The findings are indicative of the scenario that the students were already used to traditional age-old onsite learning but recently began to receive online instruction and take online examinations through emergency remote teaching just after the start of COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh in March 2020. Second, only 36% students considered online content delivery more attractive and effective than onsite delivery, but 36% did not, whereas 28% expressed no view. The findings indicate the students’ inadequate exposure to online education because it abruptly started due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. On the contrary, 84% students preferred onsite activities to online activities since they were traditionally involved in face-to-face onsite education. Third, 68% students found their teachers enjoying onsite plus online teaching more than only onsite or online teaching, and 80% favored a thoughtful combination of online and onsite teaching as being more effective than only online or onsite learning.

Thus, the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University had mostly positive perceptions of blended learning, an intended and integrated mixture of onsite and online learning. These findings lend support to the findings of the studies conducted by Manan et al. (2012), Ja’ashan (2015), Banditvilai (2016), Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017), Zhang and Zhu (2018), Akbarov, et al. (2018) and the like.

RQ2: What are the reactions of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to blended learning in the new normal?

Student reactions to blended learning in the new normal covered 10 items, Item No. 1 to 10, preparedness for online learning, readiness for onsite learning, online learning orientation, onsite learning orientation, being interested in online learning, being interested in onsite learning, no difficulty with teachers in online classes, no difficulty with teachers in onsite classes, feeling confident and comfortable to learn online and onsite, and taking online examinations smoothly and reliably.

Firstly, descriptive analysis revealed that 82% students (Strongly Agree 14% + Agree 68%) were prepared for online learning, and 88% students (Strongly Agree 46% + Agree 42%) were ready for onsite learning. Again, 52% students (Strongly Agree 10% + Agree 42%) had online learning orientation while 90% students (Strongly Agree 36% + Agree 54%) had onsite learning orientation.

That is, most of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University were ready for both online and onsite learning combined to design hybrid learning. Besides, the majority of the students had both online and onsite learning orientation though they were more used to traditional onsite than online learning. The findings were in harmony with the Means 3.88, 4.30, 3.30, and 4.14 and Standard Deviations .773, .814, 1.093 and .969 respectively (Table 5.1.2.1).

		Preparedness for online learning	Readiness for onsite learning	Online learning orientation	Onsite learning orientation
N	Valid	50	50	50	50
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.88	4.30	3.30	4.14
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	5	4	4
Std. Deviation		.773	.814	1.093	.969
Minimum		1	1	1	1
Maximum		5	5	5	5

Table 5.1.2.1: Student readiness for onsite and online learning

Secondly, 78% students (Strongly Agree 28% + Agree 50%) were interested in online learning and 90% students (Strongly Agree 52% + Agree 38%) were for onsite learning.

That is to say, the vast majority of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University were interested in both online and onsite learning thoughtfully blended to produce hybrid or blended learning. The results were in consonance with the Means 3.92 and 4.38 and Standard Deviations 1.007 and .805 respectively (Table 5.1.2.2).

		Interested in online learning	Interested in onsite learning
N	Valid	50	50
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.92	4.38
Median		4.00	5.00
Mode		4	5
Std. Deviation		1.007	.805
Minimum		1	1
Maximum		5	5

Table 5.1.2.2: Student interest in online and onsite learning

		No difficulty with teachers in online classes	No difficulty with teachers in onsite classes
N	Valid	50	50
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.22	3.62
Median		4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4
Std. Deviation		1.093	1.159
Minimum		1	1
Maximum		5	5

Table 5.1.2.3: Teacher feeling of student motivation

Thirdly, 54% students (Strongly Agree 4% + Agree 50%) encountered no difficulty with their teachers in online learning and 66% students (Strongly Agree 20% + Agree 46%) faced no difficulty with their teachers in onsite learning.

In other words, most of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University did not confront any difficulty with their teachers both in online and onsite learning purposefully mixed to generate hybrid learning. The findings agreed with the Means 3.22 and 3.62 and Standard Deviations 1.093 and 1.159 respectively (Table 5.1.2.3).

Fourthly, 72% students (Strongly Agree 22% + Agree 50%) confidently and comfortably learned online and onsite as well and only 40% students (Strongly Agree 8% + Agree 32%) smoothly and reliably took online examinations, whereas 44% students (Strongly Disagree 14%+ Disagree 30%) did not.

That is, most of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University were confident and comfortable both in online and onsite learning. Nonetheless, a large

number of students (44%) could not take online examinations smoothly and reliably. The findings matched the Means 3.76 and 2.90 and Standard Deviations 1.061 and 1.233 respectively (Table 5.1.2.3).

To respond to the second research question “What are the reactions of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to hybrid learning in the new normal?”, it is found that the students expressed mostly positive attitudes and feelings. Firstly, most of the were students ready for both online and onsite learning with relatively more traditional onsite learning orientation. The finding might be attributed to the reality of the students attending age-old face-to-face classes. Secondly, the large majority of the students had interest in both online and onsite learning together resulting in hybrid learning. This is because of the fact that the students had already had experience of in-person learning and then started to have additional experience of online learning happening during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirdly, more than 50% students did not face any difficulty with their teachers both in online and onsite learning purposively blended to design hybrid learning. This finding again indicates positive attitudes to both face-to-face and virtual learning and is in harmony with the previous findings. Fourthly, most of the students (72%) felt confident and comfortable both in online and onsite learning, a large number of them (44%) could not take online assessments smoothly and reliably. This finding might be attributed to their new and inadequate experience of online assessments quite different from onsite examinations. The positive reactions of the students to hybrid learning during the new normal countenance the findings of the research conducted by Shih (2010), Grgurovic (2011), Liu (2013), Ja’ashan (2015), Akbarov, et al. (2018) and so forth.

		Confident and comfortable to learn online and onsite	Taking online examinations smoothly and reliably
N	Valid	50	50
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.76	2.90
Median		4.00	3.00
Mode		4	4
Std. Deviation		1.061	1.233
Minimum		1	1
Maximum		5	5

Table 5.1.2.4: Student capability of learning online and onsite and taking examinations online

RQ3: How do the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University view blended learning in the new normal?

Teacher perceptions of blended learning in the new normal encompassed six items, Item No. 11 to 16, awareness of best practices of onsite learning, awareness of best practices of online learning, online delivery being more attractive and effective than onsite, onsite activities being more attractive and effective than online, students enjoying onsite plus online teaching more, and a thoughtful combination of online and onsite learning being more effective than only online or onsite learning.

The results of descriptive analysis disclosed that all the teachers (Strongly Agree 100% and Strongly Agree 75% + Agree 25% respectively) were aware of best practices of onsite learning as well as online learning.

Next, 50% teachers (Strongly Agree 50%) opined that online content delivery was more attractive and effective than onsite delivery, whereas 50% of them (Strongly Disagree 25% + Disagree 25%) expressed as an opposite view on the factor. Besides, 75% teachers (Strongly Agree 75%) considered onsite activities more attractive and effective than online activities.

Moreover, 50% teachers (Strongly Agree 25% + Agree 25%) felt that their students were enjoying onsite plus online teaching more than onsite or online alone while 50% of them gave no opinion. Further, 100% teachers (Strongly Agree 50% + Agree 50%) were in favor of a thoughtful combination of online and onsite teaching being more effective than only online or onsite learning.

Hence, most of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University had positive perceptions of hybrid or blended learning in the new normal. These results were consistent with the Means 5.00, 4.50, 3.25, 4.50, 3.75 and 4.50 and Standard Deviations .000, .926, 1.909, .926, .886 and .535 respectively.

To discuss the results displayed and described above, the teachers expressed their positive views on the third research question "How do the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University view hybrid learning in the new normal?". First, 100% teachers were aware of best practices of both onsite learning and online learning combined to create hybrid learning. This was because of the teachers' regular involvement in age-old face-to-face education and their conducting online classes and assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic that started in Bangladesh in March 2020. Second, 50% teachers thought that online content delivery was more attractive and effective than onsite delivery, whereas 50% of them did not. Further, 75% teachers preferred onsite activities being more attractive and effective than online activities. The findings unfold the teachers' insufficient knowledge and practice of online education which was new to them as they started working with this mode of instruction just after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that started in Bangladesh in March 2020. Third, 50% teachers felt that their students were enjoying onsite plus online teaching more than only onsite or online, whereas 50% teachers expressed no opinion. However, 100% teachers supported a thoughtful combination of online and onsite teaching being more effective than online or onsite teaching in isolation.

Hence, most of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University had positive perceptions of hybrid or blended learning in the new normal, although they appeared to have inadequate insight into online learning and teaching. The findings lend

support to those revealed by the studies carried out by Grgurovic (2011), Marsh (2012), Liu (2013) and so on. In addition, the perceptions the teachers of hybrid learning were consistent with those of the students in the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University.

RQ4: What are the reactions of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to blended learning in the new normal?

Teacher reactions to blended learning in the new normal included 10 items, Item No. 1 to 10, preparedness for online teaching, readiness for onsite teaching, formal training in online teaching, formal training in onsite teaching, being interested in online teaching, being interested in onsite teaching, no difficulty with students in online classes, no difficulty with students in onsite classes, feeling confident and comfortable to teach online and onsite, and conducting online examinations smoothly and reliably.

Descriptive analysis showed that 100% teachers (Strongly Agree 75% + Agree 25%) were prepared for online teaching, and 100% of them (Strongly Agree 100%) were ready for onsite teaching. Further, only 50% teachers (Strongly Agree 50%, No Opinion 25%, and Strongly Disagree 25%) had formal training in online teaching, and only 50% of them (Strongly Agree 50%, No Opinion 25%, and Strongly Disagree 25%) had formal training in onsite teaching.

Thus, all the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University were prepared for both online and onsite teaching integrated into hybrid or blended learning. However, only 50% teachers had formal training in online and onsite teaching. The findings were in consonance with the Means 4.75, 5.00, 3.50, and 3.50 and Standard Deviations .463, .000, 1.773 and 1.773 respectively.

Again, 100% teachers (Strongly Agree 75% + Agree 25%) were interested in online teaching, and 100% teachers (Strongly Agree 100%) also liked onsite teaching. That is, all the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University were interested in both online and onsite teaching. These findings agreed with the Means 4.75 and 5.00 and Standard Deviations .463 and .000 respectively.

Furthermore, 75% teachers (Agree 75%, No Opinion 25%) faced no difficulty with their students in online classes and 100% teachers (Strongly Agree 75% + Agree 25%) confronted no difficulty with their students in onsite classes.

Therefore, almost all the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University did not encounter any difficulty with their students both in online and onsite classes thoughtfully blended to create hybrid learning. The findings were consistent with the Means 3.75 and 4.75 and Standard Deviations .463 and .463 respectively (Table 5.1.4.3).

Finally, 75% teachers (Strongly Agree 75%, No Opinion 25%) were confident and comfortable both in online and onsite and only 75% teachers (Strongly Agree 50%+ Agree 25%) smoothly and reliably conducted online examinations, while 25% teachers (Disagree 25%) did not.

Hence, a large majority of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University were confident and comfortable in online and onsite teaching as well. Similarly, most of the teachers were capable to conduct online examinations smoothly and reliably. These

		No difficulty with students in online classes	No difficulty with students in onsite classes
N	Valid	8	8
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.75	4.75
Median		4.00	5.00
Mode		4	5
Std. Deviation		.463	.463
Minimum		3	4
Maximum		4	5

Table 5.1.4.3: Teacher feeling of student motivation

		Confident and comfortable to teach online and onsite	Conducting online examinations smoothly and reliably
N	Valid	8	8
	Missing	0	0
Mean		4.50	4.00
Median		5.00	4.50
Mode		5	5
Std. Deviation		.926	1.309
Minimum		3	2
Maximum		5	5

Table 5.1.4.4: Teacher expertise in teaching onsite and online and conducting examinations online

results agreed with the Means 4.50 and 4.00 and Standard Deviations .926 and 1.309 respectively (Table 5.1.4.3).

The analysis and interpretation of the teachers' reactions to the fourth research question "What are the reactions of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to hybrid learning in the new normal?" uncover that all the teachers were somewhat prepared for both online and onsite teaching included in hybrid or blended learning, although only half of them were trained in online and onsite teaching. These results were also well-aligned with the teacher's interest in both online and onsite teaching. Further, the teachers did not face any difficulty with their students both in online and onsite classes thoughtfully mixed to design hybrid or blended learning. Besides, two-thirds of the teachers were confident and comfortable in online and onsite teaching and capable to conduct online examinations smoothly and reliably, although 25% teachers had lacked skill at adminis-

tering online assessment. The findings might be attributed to some factors such as their experience of age-old face-to-face teaching in the classrooms almost without any formal training, and their practice of online instruction and assessment started with an outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh in March 2020 and supported by several online webinars and workshops arranged by the university authority.

Therefore, most of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University showed positive reactions to hybrid or blended learning in the new normal, though they seemed to lack sufficient exposure to online instruction and assessment. The results support to those disclosed by the studies carried out by Grgurovic (2011), Marsh (2012), Liu (2013) and so on. In addition, the perceptions the teachers of blended learning were consistent with those of the students in the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University.

Findings in Brief

As the study revealed, the first research question “How do the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University perceive blended learning in the new normal?” received mixed responses from the student respondents. That is, the students had mostly positive perceptions of blended learning, an intended and integrated blend of onsite and online learning, although they seemed to lack sufficient exposure to online learning.

To respond to the second research question “What are the reactions of the students of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to blended learning in the new normal?”, the students expressed mostly positive attitudes and feelings. That is, the students had mostly positive reactions to blended learning, though they deemed online examinations insufficiently smooth and reliable.

The teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University positively responded to the third research question “How do the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University view blended learning in the new normal?”. That is, most of the teachers had positive perceptions of blended learning in the new normal, although they lacked adequate insight into online education.

Finally, the teachers’ reactions to the fourth research question “What are the reactions of the teachers of the Department of English, Jahangirnagar University to blended learning in the new normal?” disclosed that all of them were ready for both online and onsite teaching, although only half of them were trained in online and onsite teaching. Therefore, most of the teachers showed positive reactions to blended learning in the new normal, though they did not have sufficient exposure to online instruction and assessment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings summed up above, the study has made recommendations for reforming the curriculum, adopting relevant instructional strategies, developing suitable materials, customizing the assessment system, integrating and installing technology, training the

teachers, upskilling the students for hybrid learning, improving the infrastructure, and adjusting the management.

The curriculum already in use for traditional face-to-face education in the classroom in the Department of English, Jahangirnagar university has to be modified and even redesigned to meet the requirements of the blended learning model, for instance, the flipped classroom adopted as suitable for the learners. That is, reformation should include modification and/or redesign of the components of the existing curriculum, such as its visions, missions, program outcomes, course objectives, teaching/learning items, instructional techniques, materials and resources, technology, infrastructure, management and so on. The basic principle controlling blended learning is to orient materials and resources to online delivery and activities and engagement to face-to-face classroom interaction, collaboration, and cooperation.

The instructional strategies, such as pair work, group work, role-plays, simulations, jigsaws and so forth that are especially effective in engaging and supporting learning in students from diverse backgrounds should be adopted. As content is delivered online and activities are performed onsite in blended learning, students should be prepared to receive materials provided by teachers and take preparation for face-to-face classroom activities based on the materials.

To development materials for blended learning, the following actions should be taken step by step: defining the intended learning outcomes of the course, creating an outline for the learning programme, determining the level of interactivity, integrating group collaboration activities, facilitating communication, compiling an inventory of resources to support learning, and making an assessment system. As content is delivered online and tasks are carried out onsite, both soft and printed materials should be prepared, adapted, selected, adopted and/or used.

To align assessment with blended learning, the assessment system of the existing the programme needs to be replanned and customized. That is, the formative assessment, such as quizzes, presentations, assignments, portfolios, viva voce and the like can be administered online while the summative assessment, for example, the course final examinations can be given and taken onsite.

In blended learning, integration of technology is as essential as multi-dimensional. There should be sufficient space and use of necessary technological tools in the curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, and even a single lesson plan. For example, materials should allow teachers to deliver them through online file hosting services like dropbox, google drive, etc. emails, google classroom and so on.

As blended learning entails extensive use of technological tools as well as online operations including basic computer and smart phone literacy, the teachers have to have hands-on training relevant to their instruction and assessment. And the management should arrange required workshops, seminars and the like to train its teachers so that they can comfortably and confidently conduct blended learning.

The students are commonly used to age-old face-to-face learning in the classroom setting. To make them capable of being involved in blended learning, they should be exposed to this new mode of learning through varied orientation and motivational events including

workshops, seminars, presentations and so forth. Besides, the management should upskill them and help them acquire basic computer and smartphone literacy.

To implement blended learning, some infrastructural supports are required. The infrastructure covers computers and/or laptops, multi-media projectors, sound systems, interactive whiteboards, Internet connection with adequate speed, sufficient power supply, networking equipment, well-equipped classrooms, digital libraries, management facilities and so forth.

The management including the department Chairperson, teachers, non-academic staff members and technical persons has to adjust itself to blended learning. This is because they are responsible for the different aspects of the blended programme and operation, such as planning the programme encompassing the curriculum, materials, assessment and so on, extending managerial and technical assistance, providing infrastructural and financial support, ensuring training and orientation facilities and the like.

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Appendix

Appendix-I

The Student Questionnaire

Indicators:

Please consider the scale:

Strongly disagree = SD =1; Disagree = D = 2; No opinion =NO = 3;

Agree =A = 4; Strongly agree = SA =5

Instructions:

Please read the following statements and tick one of the options that best expresses your opinion/feeling/reaction/attitude/experience:

Sl. No.	Item	Opinion				
		SD=1	D=2	NO=3	A=4	SA=5
1	I am prepared to learn English language online.					
2	I am ready to learn English language onsite.					
3	I have online English language learning orientation.					
4	I have onsite English language learning orientation.					
5	I am interested to learn English language online.					
6	I am interested to learn English language onsite.					
7	I face no difficulty with my teachers because they are ready and motivated to conduct online classes.					

8	I face no difficulty with my teachers because they are ready and motivated to conduct onsite classes.					
9	I can confidently and comfortably learn English listening, speaking, reading and writing online and onsite.					
10	I can take online English language examinations smoothly and reliably.					
11	I know onsite English language learning has some best practices.					
12	I know online English language learning has some best practices.					
13	I find online delivery of materials is more attractive and effective than onsite delivery.					
14	I realize onsite activities are more attractive and effective than online activities.					
15	I find my teachers enjoy a combination of onsite and online teaching more than only onsite or online teaching.					
16	I think a thoughtful combination of online and onsite learning will be more effective than online or onsite learning alone.					

Appendix-II

The Teacher Questionnaire

Indicators:

Please consider the scale:

Strongly disagree = SD =1; Disagree = D = 2; No opinion =NO = 3;

Agree =A = 4; Strongly agree = SA =5

Instructions:

Please read the following statements and tick one of the options that best expresses your perception/opinion/feeling/reaction/attitude/experience:

Sl. No.	Item	Opinion				
		SD=1	D=2	NO=3	A=4	SA=5
1	I am prepared to teach English language online.					
2	I am ready to teach English language on-site.					
3	I have formal training in online English language teaching.					
4	I have formal training in onsite English language teaching.					
5	I am interested to teach English language online.					
6	I am interested to teach English language onsite.					
7	I face no difficulty with my students because they are ready and motivated to attend online classes.					
8	I face no difficulty with my students because they are ready and motivated to attend onsite classes.					

9	I can confidently and comfortably teach English listening, speaking, reading and writing online and onsite.					
10	I can conduct online English language examinations smoothly and reliably.					
11	I am aware of some best practices of onsite English language teaching.					
12	I know online English language teaching has some best practices.					
13	I understand online delivery of materials is more attractive and effective than onsite delivery.					
14	I feel onsite activities are more attractive and effective than online activities.					
15	I find my students enjoy a combination of onsite and online learning more than only onsite or online learning.					
16	I think a thoughtful combination of online and onsite teaching will be more effective than online or onsite teaching alone.					

Author's bio

Md. Maniruzzaman has been working as a professor, Department of English at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. He is also rendering his services as global professional member of TESOL International Association. He has more than 100 research papers to his credit in reputed National as well as International journals which bear testimony of his scholarship. Besides, he has contributed immensely in the area of translation, book reviews and books as a sole author. His trust areas of research include TESOL methodology, curriculum and syllabus design, educational technology and management coupled with literatures in English.